

REMARKS

Applicant has amended claims 1-5, 8, 10, 15, 33-35 and 38 for clarification purposes and canceled claim 56 without prejudice or disclaimer. No new matter has been added. Support is found in [0009] and [0026] of the specification.

On page 2, paragraph 4 of the Office Action, claim 15 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Applicant has amended this claim to correct its claim dependency. Accordingly, Applicant contends that rejection is rendered moot and respectfully requests withdrawal of the rejection.

On page 3, paragraph 6 of the Office Action, claims 1-14, 19-22, 24-28, 30-32, 36 and 56 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Dupont, U.S. Patent No. 6,452,325 ("Dupont"). Dupont does not disclose applying a coating to a fluorescent light tube having end caps with electrically conductive pins extending from the end caps with the electrically conductive pins uncovered during the coating process. In fact, Dupont discloses covering the "electrical terminals at each end of the lamp" with a silicone tubing fitted over the electrical terminals 18, 18' at each end of the lamp to protect the electrical terminals from being coated with any plastic (col. 2, lines 12-16; col. 3, lines 7-9 and 45-50; col. 4, lines 3-10). Accordingly, Dupont differs from the present invention. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

On page 4, paragraph 7 of the Office Action, claims 1-7, 9-11, 13, 15-16, 18-21, 24, 26-27, 30, 33, 36-37, and 56 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Payne (WO02/16049) ("Payne"). Payne does not disclose applying a coating to a fluorescent light tube having end caps with electrically conductive pins extending from the end caps with the electrically conductive pins uncovered during the coating process. Payne discloses a linkage member for linking together articles during coating. The linkage member has two holes 11A,

11B formed in each end face 12 that are sized to receive the pins of the tubular lamps having the pins corresponding to the recesses (p. 5, lines 3-10). Thus, Payne teaches covering the electrically conductive pins with the linkage member during coating. Accordingly, Payne differs from the present invention, and Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

On page 5, paragraph 8, claims 1, 3-4, and 6-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Nolan, U.S. Patent No. 4,499,850 ("Nolan"). Nolan does not disclose coating a fluorescent light tube having end caps with electrically conductive pins extending from the end caps with the electrically conductive pins uncovered during the coating process. Nolan discloses masking the pins and the end caps (col. 2, lines 55-56) and after coating unmasking the electrical connecting pins and end caps (col. 3, lines 1-3; col. 7, lines 60-68; and col. 8, lines 1-3). Thus, Nolan differs from the present invention. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

On page 6 of the Office Action, paragraph 11, claims 24-28 and 33-35 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dupont. On page 7 of the Office Action, paragraph 12, claims 6, 11, 15-18, 26, 38-41 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dupont, as applied to claim 1, and further in view of Weingarten, U.S. Patent No. 3,706,216 ("Weingarten"). On page 7, paragraph 13, claims 23, 29, and 42 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dupont, as applied to claim 1, and further in view of Duzyk. On page 8, paragraph 14 of the Office Action, claim 42 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dupont in view of Weingarten, as applied to claim 38, and further in view of Duzyk. On page 8, paragraph 15 of the Office Action, claim 37 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dupont, and further in view of

Payne. Applicant respectfully disagrees with all of the above obviousness rejections, relying upon Dupont as the primary reference, for the following reasons.

Applicant contends that Dupont teaches away from the present invention. As discussed above, Dupont does not teach applying a coating to a fluorescent light tube having end caps with electrically conductive pins extending from the end caps with the electrically conductive pins uncovered during the coating process. Applicant contends that Dupont teaches away from the present invention because it teaches that the electrically conductive pins must be covered. Dupont teaches covering the “electrical terminals at each end of the lamp” with a silicone tubing fitted over the electrical terminals 18, 18” at each end of the lamp to protect the electrical terminals from being coated with any plastic.

In contrast, the present invention teaches that the electrically conductive pins are uncovered during the coating process and teaches a different technique for keeping the pins free of plastic coating. As noted on pages 2 and 3 of Applicant’s specification, the pins must remain free of coating material. When using an extruder to coat the light tubes, three avenues are available to address the need to keep the coating material from contacting the pins: 1) cover the pins during coating; 2) clean the pins after coating and 3) coat the light tubes in such a manner that prevents the coating from contacting the pins without the need to cover the pins while ensuring that the coating is applied evenly and adheres to the end caps. Covering the pins requires the use of either a disposable cover or a cover capable of being removed, cleaned of the coating material and reused. Further, because the coating is applied to both the light tube and the cover, removing the cover may tear, stretch, or otherwise damage the coating on the light tube, rendering the coating ineffectual. Finally, the covers must be aligned to fit around the pins snugly or else the coating material may seep around the cover and contact the pins. Thus, using

a cover to protect the pins is undesirable. Likewise, cleaning the pins after coating is also undesirable because of the risk of damage to the pins and the coating, as well as the time required to ensure each pin is completely free of the coating material. Thus, the desirable choice is to coat the light tubes with an extruder in such a manner as to ensure complete application of the coating material while eliminating the need to protect the pins during the coating process. The method of the present invention utilizes gaps formed between each sequentially fed light tube to form a chain. The gaps between the sequential light tubes are maintained at a desired length to ensure that each light tube is coated without interference from a preceding or succeeding light tube and to prevent the coating from contacting the pins of the end caps of the light tube. The length of the gaps may be regulated by adjusting the travel rate of the light tubes undergoing the coating process. Accordingly, Dupont teaches away from the present invention and, therefore, cannot be properly combined with any of Weingarten, Duzyk or Payne to render the present invention obvious. Nevertheless, Applicant's coating method is not obvious in view of the teachings of the cited references, as none of the cited references teach or suggest coating with the electrically conductive pins uncovered by utilizing a gap and adjusting the length between the tubes. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections.

On page 8, paragraph 16 of the Office Action, claims 31-32 and 34-35 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Payne. Applicant submits that these claims are unobvious for the same reasons as independent claim 10. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully urged that the present claims are in condition for allowance and reconsideration is requested. An early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. Should there be any questions regarding this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number shown below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan S. Jackson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

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